CLAIMS
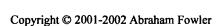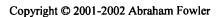
I claim:

1. A method of sifting the results of a search query using keywords from said search results, said method comprising the steps of:

    (a)   extracting keywords from each search query result;

    (b)   compiling said keywords from said search results into a single list of keywords;

    (c)   presenting said list of keywords and said search results to the user;

    (d)   providing a method for the user to select keywords from said list and apply sifting operations to those keywords;

    (e)   creating a derived list of search results from the initial list by applying said user-selected sifting operations on said user-selected keywords to each result in the list of initial search results, with the end result being the exclusion of certain results from said derived list, based on said keywords, said sifting operations, and/or said search results themselves.

2. The method according to claim 1, step (e), wherein in addition to excluding certain search results from the derived list, the method also optionally ranks and/or reorders the remaining results within the derived list, based on the keywords, the sifting operations, and/or the search results themselves.

3.   The method according to claim 1, steps (d) and (e), wherein the sifting operations include but are not limited to the following:

(a)   "including" results from the initial list that are associated with a given keyword;

(b)   "requiring" that all results in the derived list be associated with a given keyword;

(c)   "excluding" results from the initial list that are associated with a given keyword; or

(d)   any other operation which may include or exclude a result in the derived list based on a given keyword and its association with that result, or which may rank the result within said derived list.

4.   The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of providing the user with a method to select a particular search result and display it.

5.   The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of combining the user-selected keywords and sifting operations with the original search query to formulate a new, more targeted search query.

6.   The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

(a)   inputting a search query from the user;

(b)   submitting said search query to a search engine, whether internal or external to the present invention; and

(c)   retrieving the search results directly from said search engine.

7.   The method according to claim 6, further comprising the steps of:

(a)   reformulating said search query individually for one or more search engines,

(b)   submitting said reformulated search query to each of said one or more said search engines,

(c)   combining the search results from the said one or more search engines into one single list of search results.

8.   The method according to claim 1, step (a), wherein the extraction of keywords from a document in the list of said search results comprises one or more of the following steps:

(a)   reading a list of keywords previously associated with the document;

(b)   using a separate open or proprietary algorithm (the inner workings of which are not claimed here) to extract the most likely keywords from the document; or

(c)   using any other suitable method or mechanism (the inner workings of which are not claimed here) that associates documents with appropriate keywords.

9.   The method according to claim 1, step (b), wherein the compilation process comprises one or more of the following steps:

(a)   combining keywords that are different forms of the same word by means of grammatical analysis algorithms (the inner workings of which are not claimed here);

(b)   combining keywords that are synonyms using a database or thesaurus, in cases where such combination is mostly unambiguous (the specific mechanism for doing which is not claimed here);

(c)   grouping or clustering keywords that are similar or have similar meanings according to some algorithm or method (the inner workings of which are not claimed here);

(d)   excluding keywords that are deemed to be of little use according to some algorithm or method (the inner workings of which are not claimed here); or

(e)   any other algorithm which may optimize the final list of keywords (the inner workings of which are not claimed here).

10.   The method according to claim 1, step (b), wherein during the compilation process any of the following pieces of information are gathered:

(a)   statistics on each keyword, including but not limited to the number of search results with which said keyword is associated;

(b)   statistics on sets of keywords, such as the number of documents in which two or more keywords appear together; or

(c)   any other information or statistics that can be derived from the keywords and the search results themselves by any algorithm (the inner workings of which are not claimed here) and which may be of use to the user or other algorithms within this invention.